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NOTES AND COMMENTS.

I.

THERE is now pending before the New York Legislature a bill "to prevent discrimination on account of sex at municipal elections." It enacts that:

"No inspector of election or poll clerk shall hereafter refuse to register or to receive the vote of any citizen offering to register prior to or to vote at any municipal election by reason of the sex of any citizen who in other respects shall possess the qualifications required by law, and that a violation of the provisions of this act shall be a misdemeanor."

This bill was presented in the Assembly by Hon. George Z. Erwin of St. Lawrence, and in the Senate by Hon. Edmund L. Pitts of Orleans. Several of the strongest men in both parties are openly pledged to the measure, as are the presiding officers of both Houses; General Edward F. Jones, the President of the Senate, being an outspoken advocate of equal rights, while General James W. Husted, the Speaker of the Assembly, has long been a champion of the cause.

Some recent events have done much toward making women see that their practical interests are involved in the possession of the ballot. The salaries of the school teachers of New York city have been "readjusted" by the Board of Education, with the usual result of increasing the discrepancy of pay for men and women teachers doing the same work, the reductions in salaries coming almost without an exception out of the pockets of the women who are acknowledgedly better teachers than the men. It does not take an intelligent instructress who has suffered in this way very long to reflect that, if women were voters, they could control the election of the mayor, who appoints the Board of Education, and thus secure an influence in that body which would prevent such injustice in the future.

The recent report of Mr. Charles F. Peck, the labor commissioner for this State, contains the most appalling disclosures of the wretched condition of the working women of New York, always paid less than men for the same amount of skilled labor. Showing themselves, despite all their disadvantages, to be more economical and honest than men, they were condemned to an existence that is little more than a struggle for life carried on amid squalor and wretchedness in conditions that foster vice and drive virtue to despair.

Even so conservative a paper as the "New York Tribune," asks, in view of these facts, if women would not be likely to have better pay for their work if they had the protection which the ballot gives?

I ask your support of this measure.

LILLIE DEVEREUX BLAKE.

II.

IN the January number of the REVIEW "John H. Keyser" pointedly suggests a remedy for the evils resulting from "the accumulation of large personal fortunes." As the way "to harmonize conditions between labor and capital," he recommends "a beneficent law of limitation," making "a scale of graduated taxation upon accumulated and accumulating fortunes," and making "the sum of \$300,000 the limit of a fortune." Aside from the question as to the intrinsic justice of relieving poverty by putting the burden of taxes upon wealth, the "beneficent law," suggested as a means of arresting the tendency of our age to the centralization of capital, is of peculiar interest. The suggestion totally ignores the existence of natural economic and social laws, or it assumes their complete subordination to "beneficent laws" enacted by legislatures.

It seems not to occur to the author of the suggestion that the very evils he desires to remedy may perhaps be traced to existing "beneficent laws" suggested by his predecessors! Nor does he perceive it possible that his "beneficent law" may generate unexpected evils, perpetuating the necessity for legislative doctoring. If these are natural economic and social laws, they cannot be suspended, but their operation may be mischievously disturbed by legislative attempts to improve them by amendment.

The need of the times is earnest study of these economic and social laws, that we may discover their true working, and appreciate the deformities produced by many supposed "beneficent laws," enacted by legislatures as specifics for real or imaginary evils. If, for instance, the "disparities" the writer speaks of are the natural results of those economic and social laws, it would be unreasonable to denounce them as unjust and as evils to be remedied by "beneficent" legislation. But, if an individual may not amass a fortune of many millions in a life-time without violating those natural laws; that, nevertheless, many individuals are performing this feat without crime, justifies the suspicion that some "beneficent laws," enacted by legislatures, protect their operations.

That the social problems adverted to may be solved by more "beneficent legislation" seems emphatically negatived by experience. But the more pertinent inquiry suggests itself: May not complete emancipation of our economic and industrial interests from "beneficent" State-intervention lead to such solution?

H. TEICHMUELLER.